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The Church at the Center

Warren H. Wilson

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The Church a Community Force. *By Worth M. Tippy*
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ADDITIONAL VOLUMES TO BE ISSUED

A FARMER'S MORNING

THE CHURCH AT THE CENTER

BY
WARREN H. WILSON
Author of *THE CHURCH OF THE OPEN COUNTRY*

NEW YORK
Missionary Education Movement of the
United States and Canada
1914

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I

DEFINITIONS

SOCIAL service is more than altruism or betterment or uplift, all of which are attempted for personal reasons. And social service is something else than neighborliness. It is help for a society through an organization; such service as a church can render a community. The social value of a church is its usefulness in the community. That church has social value which satisfies the common needs. In our Lord's time "the poor," "the sinners," "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," were the people whose needs were common to all. To them Jesus gave his own help and directed the first attention of organized Christianity.

Social service in our time means organized service to those in whom the com-

munity has a common interest. It is that kind of help to render which one organizes a group or joins a society.

In an address by Mr. John M. Glenn is the following: "It is not enough that a church shall take good care of its own members, no matter how fully it may supply them with spiritual food. No church can claim to have done its duty or faced its rightful responsibility, unless it has been constantly alert to seek and to find everything that is destructive of men's physique and men's souls that may lie within its reach.

"The churches have not, on the whole, realized that they have a duty to assume social responsibilities, to know and understand their neighborhoods, their cities, and their special localities, to examine into actual conditions of living and learn what these are and what may be done to improve them, and to insist that their own members

as well as the state shall do their utmost to abolish patent existing evils.

"If a church has not inspired its members to bold adventure in behalf of the weak and for the sake of the community, it has no right to call itself a church, nor to think that it is listening to the call of its great head."

That church has social force which leads the community. It is a community church. Its service is universal: as the Master said, "It is the servant of all." Every church has value to some people. Some churches serve a few, some serve "the best people," but the church with social force serves all.

To serve all means selection. It does not mean that the church with social force has everybody in its congregation. The community church may be attended by only a part of the people, while serving all the people. It is impossible to give

identical help to each individual. No church has any business to be more impartial than her Master, who devoted himself to those whose needs were critical, and therefore of common concern. In Christ's time these people were "the prodigals," "the lost pieces of money," "the lost sheep." In the country community of our time the church should serve the people who are in danger of losing out, who may have to leave the community. These are the sick, the poor, the young men and women, old people who find it hard to be "retired farmers," the renters who till land they do not own, the people who are in debt, and the hired or foreign-born help.

The purpose of social service is to minister to the whole community, the rich as well as the poor, the learned as well as the ignorant. The ministry to the poor, or ignorant, or other needy persons is not given them because one prefers the ignorant

or the poor, or because he has any aversion to the rich or the learned. It is for the reason that to serve the poor is to serve all. To teach the ignorant is to help the learned and to heal the sick is to minister at the same time to the well. The only way to minister to the whole community is to help the needy.

To assist these or any of them is to help everybody. Service of these is "service of all." Whatever church helps them is leader of the community, because to satisfy their needs is to make the community whole.

A certain character is found in those who join a serving group or society. Without this character they would not be in a community church, or if they were, they would rebel against its spirit and oppose its methods. This character is found perfectly embodied only in Jesus Christ. It is the spirit of a consecrated servant whose master is God. Every Christian man might

well ask himself whether he would make a good servant; whether he could wait on table, take orders from another man; whether he could cheerfully hold another man's coat, or wash his feet. Jesus did such things and his spirit has been called the spirit of a servant. He called himself the servant of God. This is the spirit of the members of a community church. Held together by like-mindedness, the traits they have in common we call spirituality, for theirs is the spirit which is found in heaven, as we know heaven through the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who came not to be served, but to serve. These traits of character are the evidence that men are regenerate through Christ.

Knowledge is necessary for social service, as well as a right disposition. For the purpose of securing reliable knowledge social surveys are made. Investigation must be thorough in order that knowledge

may be accurate and reliable. Furthermore, the findings must be published to all who are to take part in the service, because the work is democratic and the intelligent participation of every Christian is essential to the result.

There never was a time when full, large Christianity was so evidently necessary as now. The dependence of the Christian Church upon education, its essential relation to assured and ample knowledge of conditions, is exhibited in the task of community service to which all the churches are putting their hands. The social force of the Christian Church can be exerted only by people of a devout spirit consciously giving themselves to the purposes of Jesus Christ, and guided in their action by all that may be known about the conditions and the needs of mankind for whom the Savior died.

In this book the country church is defined

as the church in a community of less than 2,500 population. Generally these communities have farming as the main concern. Very few of them, except in mining sections, depend for their living on anything except farming, and the secondary businesses of farming. So that the country church is very closely associated with agriculture, both in the village and in the open fields.

II

A MODE OF RURAL SURVEY FOR RECORD AND FOR PURPOSES OF PRACTICAL EXHIBIT

SURVEY is the name for a systematic study of a people, with a view to serving them as they have need. The people studied may be a parish or community; or a city, county, or larger social population. The survey is orderly and systematic in method, comprehensive in the facts studied, so that nothing is left out of account. Its purpose is an authoritative, reliable report which will put an end to hesitation and will render helpful service to the whole community possible. It is essential to a survey that it be published, for it concerns both the helpers and the

helped. Social service is always democratic and public.

There are two purposes of a Survey and as a result there are two kinds of Survey. One is for educational purposes, and is a study of conditions well known to the leader of a class, who desires through investigation to train and enlarge the mind of his students. A good example of this type of rural survey is Miss Anna B. Taft's "Community Study for Country Districts." An excellent method of surveying a country community, especially if it centers in a village or town, is entitled, "A Method of Making a Social Survey of a Rural Community," which is published by Prof. C. J. Galpin of the University of Wisconsin. Each of these is so clear and simple that it can be applied to the purposes of a working group or class in a country church. The value of Miss Taft's "Community Study" is very great

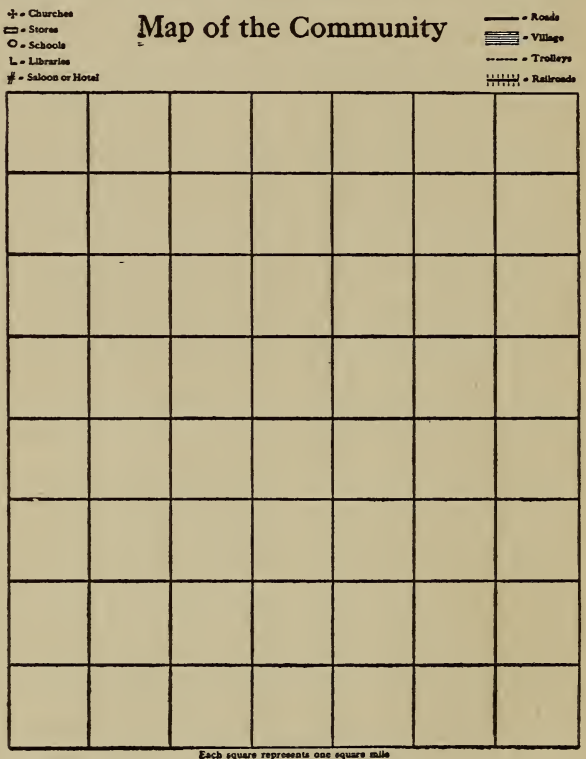
in religious education. It should be used to set a group of adults at work in the service of their community.

The second purpose of a survey is record. This type of survey has educational value, but its main purpose is to record and preserve a statement of the conditions discovered in the country community, in order that workers in the service of the church and the community may return to this record for reference and for authority at a later time. We give in this chapter the material for making such a survey.

(1) *A Map of the Community*

This should be drawn to scale, on the basis of including in the community all the land, households, business and social institutions within a "team haul" radius of the church, with the streams of water and highways, trolley lines and railroads, traversing the community. This graphic showing of the community, with every institution and

every household in its place, will do much to make clear the problem of the church in the country. It shows the whole of the domain of the church, which is a part of



the kingdom of God. Nothing is secular, nothing common or material among the possessions of God; so that every store, every schoolhouse, and every farmhouse is a part of the parish of a community church.

The measured areas will assist in drawing the map to scale. Symbols on the margin should be used to indicate the various features of the countryside.

(2) *Industrial and Religious Life*

What is the chief source of income in the community?..... How many persons are engaged in it?..... How many members of the church get their living in this industry?..... Name other industries..... How many are engaged in each industry?..... How many members of the church are there in each of these industries?..... From which industrial group does the church fail to secure members?.....

How many of the population of the community are old settlers?..... What proportion of the church-membership is from this class?..... How many foreign-born or of foreign-born parentage?..... How many church-

members from the foreign element in the population?.....

Among the farmers what proportion own their farms?..... What proportion of the farmers are renters?..... What proportion of the church-membership are farm renters? .....

(3) *Social and Moral Life*

Name in the order of their popularity the places where men meet for informal conversation..... ..... Where do boys in their teens meet?..... ..... Name the public assembly or gathering that is attended by the community in a body..... ..... How often does the community meet as a whole?..... Who is the most influential man among the whole population?..... .... What is his occupation?..... Give the number of families in the community..... ..... Give the number of social gatherings or recreational enterprises of a public nature in the past six months..... What proportion of these was provided by lodges?..... The Grange?..... Open societies?..... ..... The clubs?..... Public schools? ..... Churches?.....

How many of these social gatherings were provided without pay?..... How many were used as a means of raising money?.....

Name the forms of recreation or play practised in the community..... Name those which are morally wholesome ..... What are the churches doing to increase or to support wholesome recreation?.....

How many saloons in the community?..... .... Pool rooms?..... Public dance halls?..... Moving picture shows?..... ..... Theaters?.....

How many arrests in the past twelve months? ..... Illegitimate births in the past twelve months?..... What centers of moral infection?..... Is the moral tone of the community improving?.....

(4) *The Church and the Community*

Name the churches in the community and state denomination..... Which church is best fitted in building?..... Parsonage?.... ..... Land?..... Seating capacity? ..... Kitchen?..... Parlors? Cemetery?..... Horse sheds?..... or other equipment to serve the needs of the community?..... Which church is next in point of fittings or equipment?.....

Describe the financial condition of each church in the following respects: Total amount raised for local expenditures?..... Amount paid pastor?..... Amount given for benevo-

lences?..... Mortgage on property?.... ..... Amount raised from outside funds?.... .....

State mode used by each church for raising money?..... Pew rents?..... Envelopes?..... Plate contributions?.... ..... Give membership of each church..... .... Is it increasing?..... Give attendance of each church..... Is it increasing?..... Give membership of Sunday-school of each church .....

What religious service is needed in this community which no church provides?..... How many ministers serve in the community?.... ..... Name them, giving opposite each name the number of Sundays per month on which he preaches in the community and place of residence of the minister..... Which minister is most actively interested in the whole community? .....

III

THE COUNTRY CHURCH PROGRAM

THE church needs a program nowadays, because religion, which is as precious in men's eyes as ever it was, has changed its emphasis. We used to have a religion of fear and its program was very simple. It was to bring men out of fear into comfort and confidence. Men still fear the unseen and the old program is a good program, but the sense of fear is no longer so mighty as the sense of use or value. We need a new program because the church has nowadays to demonstrate its value and to increase its usefulness to all men.

Worship is the first and the last of the

program in the country. The purpose of the church is to bring men near to God, and worship is the method of drawing near to God. Orderly worship is, above all, necessary to the country church. The perfection of details, foresight as to procedure and dignity in the public service of worship, are essential to all good work. No minister can mend throughout the week what he can mar on the Sunday morning. A church does not need to be liturgical to be reverent. The simplest worshipers are they who often have the holiest places of worship, and convey the most of fear and awe and love in their public services. But before any program of active service, the orderly worship of the house of prayer is to be regarded as the minister's chief service. The worship of the Lord's day is the highest expression of community life. It is the privilege which the minister of religion shares with no other public servant.

(1) In all its work the church deals with individuals. Its purpose is always to bring men to God, through obedience to a personal Savior, therefore it is in all things an evangelistic and educational institution. Every church should regularly preach the gospel of personal salvation. It is wise to let no year pass without at least one season of evangelism. Leading pastors in the country have their preferred times for spiritual quickening. We recommend here only that the church foresee the time of its evangel and at the beginning of the year plan for a harvest of souls. In order to win men to loyal, obedient service in the church, which is "the body of Christ," it is better that the pastor be the evangelist and that the work be done by the people of the church through faithful, simple preaching and personal work.

(2) The teaching of the Bible is the greatest means of conversion through the

building of personal character. The Sunday-school is organized for this purpose. It should be taken seriously by all and its work done in no slovenly or careless manner, but with the utmost thoroughness. The minister himself in a small church may well be the superintendent. This is his opportunity to teach. He should certainly be identified with the school, holding himself and every other teacher strictly to account for presence or absence. Systematic and thorough methods, with classes graded upon the public school standards, should prevail in the Sunday-school. The purpose of the work is to bring all the children naturally through the development of knowledge along with the growth in character to acceptance of Jesus Christ.

The teaching of the Bible from the pulpit in simple terms, with homely illustrations from the farm, from nature, and from that field of experience common to the an-

cient Hebrews and to modern country people, is essential to the educational service of the church.

Family prayer should be diligently organized among the families of the congregation. It is a mistake to suppose that the family altar is in our time unnecessary or that it cannot be set up. Canadian churches are alive to the value and necessity of family worship. There are churches in city and in country throughout all North America in which as large a proportion of the families have the reading of the Bible and prayer together as the proportion who do thorough Sunday-school work. These three factors in the teaching of the country church make up a complete program of instruction, and the basis of all is the imparting of gospel truth to the growing, absorbing mind of the young.

(3) A sound financial policy is religiously necessary in the country church. It

is a part of piety for men to give. We are not ashamed that our civilization has much to do with money. Freedom has used finance in the fight against tyranny, and the Protestant doctrine of personal salvation takes form in the Protestant practise of owning personal property. We are not ashamed of our thrift, of our savings, and of our ownership. These must be consecrated in a deliberate, systematic doctrine and scheme of finance in the local church.

Farmers are beginning to prosper. The days of poverty are nearly over. Foundations are being laid for a thrifty and rewarding agriculture. The church must lead those who face economic revival, in consecrating the new prosperity unto the Lord. The Bible is full of this doctrine of giving the "first fruits" and of "laying by" upon the first day of the week. The country church, which has been an inexpensive institution with no budget, the object of

little care or attention, must be sanctified and redeemed to a divine use by a better system of finance. In all the leading churches, with substantial unanimity as to method, financial campaigns are proposed. It is our place here only to insist that regular and appropriate payment unto the Lord is essential to rural religion.

Great advance is made in these days in the adoption of the Budget System by country churches. Notable gains are reported from Canadian churches. The farmers are beginning to consecrate the prosperity which is coming to them to the Lord. The close relation which may not exist between economic prosperity and spirituality does maintain itself between economic prosperity and church growth. When good people do well their churches thrive: and as the church has much to do with prosperity we may expect that higher levels of personal religion will be attained

through the consecration of economic advance in the country church.

(4) The country church should have a part in moral reform. American country churches have transformed the temperance movement, which once was purely a personal appeal to "sign the pledge," into a war upon organized vice which makes its home in the saloon. The country church in this demonstrated its social power. It showed itself to be an organization serving society. The temperance movement has been a gallant crusade for the rescue of the community from the grip of the saloon.

There are other reforms to which the country church should give its attention. None is beneath the notice of the church if it concerns the whole of the community or of the commonwealth. Nothing is alien to Christianity which has to do with humanity. If God wants a thing done, the church ought to lead in doing it. For this

reason the church has taken a great part in the country life movement, which is a social enterprise for the rescue of the country community from decadence.

(5) The church in the country should remember its allies and keep close to them in mutual service. These are the common schools, the Grange, neighborhood and community associations, and all societies or movements for betterment or for charity, justice, good citizenship, or other good cause. He that doeth righteousness is of God, and all societies for well-doing are the church's kin. They should often visit the meeting-house. The church should always be loyal to them, should never ostracize them, and at least once a year should appear with each of them in public.

(6) The country church should be a community center. There is no other institution universal among farmers and freely supported. The church differs from

the school, which has the support of government, in that grown up people use it seriously. The grown-up interests of the community, therefore, ought to have a place in the church. Nothing of a universal character is unworthy. To be a leading church means to be "servant of all," and this universal usefulness lays a great duty on the church. It is then the one institution in which the community has a home. And where else, unless it be in the schoolhouse, should it be at home? This universal service is the solution of the problem of church comity or federation. The one way to unite the whole community in religious matters is to serve needs common to all. Some of these needs will appear in the features of the program which are to follow.

(7) The church in the country should provide, or at least endorse, a community policy of recreation. Nobody else in the

READY FOR A PLOWING MATCH

country is doing so, except, in some places, the country school, which has a similar duty. Recreation, or organized play, is a necessity in a working community. It is as necessary that a working community play together as it is that a workingman shall sweat. We must respect the spirit of play just as much as we respect perspiration. It is as unhealthy to be without one as it is to be without the other. Many country churches have undertaken deliberately to direct and to provide the recreations needed in the community. What a noble word recreation is! It indicates in its very syllables that we are taking part in the work of God. We are refreshing and renewing the tired body and mind. Furthermore, recreation has a moral power. Play is only bad when it is opposed by good people. It is on the playground that children learn welcome lessons in telling the truth, in honorable treatment of one an-

other, in obeying one another, and in self-sacrifice for a common end. The country needs leaders and it is in play that we first discover leaders. Therefore, because play trains the conscience and organized play trains the citizen and disciplines the young soldier, the church should see that needful facilities for play are provided in the community. It may be that the school will take charge of the playground. It may be that some public-spirited citizens will see that the young people are cared for, but the church should be custodian of the problem of recreation, because play has so much to do with right and wrong. The school is the home of the intellect, but the church is the home of the conscience. Therefore, recreation is the business of the church.

Some communities have done their duty by celebrating the holidays of the year as great play days. We have not nearly so many holidays as the Hebrews, and those

who object to holidays because they take people from work must have forgotten that God Almighty made the Jews a rich and industrious and devout nation through a training in which feasts, holidays, outdoor picnics, living in booths, and going on excursions occupied a great place every year. The solemn, historical events of the year are celebrated by the Jews in festivals of joy. All these feasts bring the whole people together. Families are reunited, relatives exchange visits and presents, and the cares of business are laid aside. If we are going to make the Americans a great people, we will have to use many holidays as a method in the process, and the harder we work the more holidays we need.

Dramatic entertainments occupy an increasing place in the country. The church may well take charge of these herself, as for many centuries in the simple life of medieval Europe the churches did. The

Christmas play is a good way of showing the Christmas spirit for the whole community. It freshens up the gospel story and puts it in modern dress. Everybody comes to such a play; Roman Catholic and Protestant, rich and poor. Usually dramatic entertainments are easier to provide than musical entertainments, and they are more popular. More people can understand them and take part in them.

(8) The country church should be a learner in the new science of agriculture. When God was making a people he taught them to possess a land. The Hebrews were made a holy nation in part by the agricultural teaching of Deuteronomy. Scientific agriculture is a modern commentary on Deuteronomy. It is the knowledge and the imperative given by God Almighty for the possession of the soil by those who work it. The church has no need as a rule to teach agriculture, nor does the American

church need to set up a school of soils and silos and animal husbandry, for this teaching is provided by the universities and by the government. But the church should provide the spirit in which this knowledge shall be used.

For that reason the minister and the people must be students of agriculture. The same zeal which the ministers have put in the past into the study of "the promised land" in Palestine should be put upon the study of the promised land in America; for the American farmer is taking possession of his promised land just as the Hebrews were doing in the time of Joshua and of Samuel, and he has as hard a fight against modern Philistines as they had. When country people are praying for the possession of land they need a church to help them.

Therefore it is often a good thing to hold a farmers' institute in a church. It is a

far better thing for minister and people to indicate clearly the duty that man owes to the soil, and the responsibility of those who till the soil to the whole people. The main purpose in all of this should be that the people of the country church shall be good farmers. Indeed, if the church is to survive in the country, it must be true in the future as in the past, that the members of the church of Christ are the best farmers in the community. This is necessary, because the land in the country is passing into the hands of better farmers and out of the possession of poorer farmers.

(9) The country church must maintain its alliance with the country school. Protestants have as a rule no parochial schools, and that fact shows, not that they disbelieve, but that they believe in the school. Christianity is dependent on education. It is an expression of intelligence applied to the problem of religion. The religion of

Jesus Christ differs from other religions in knowledge and in sound convictions. This is why Christ's advent could occur only "when the fulness of the time came."

The Protestant churches, which do not have parochial schools, are deliberately committed to the public school. They must not, therefore, abandon the public school and forget their dependence upon it. If they do and if the public school is abandoned by good people, the churches will perish, for in the end Protestantism and Christianity are dependent for their form and their maintenance upon trained intelligence. Protestant congregations are dependent for their continuance upon adequate public schools.

But we cannot directly control the public school as the Roman Catholic priest controls the parochial school. All the more spiritual must be our alliance with it. The church must train its people in those ideas

of education which will result in good common schools. The minister must be alive and alert to the modern development of education. His contribution to the community by indirect means and the obedience of his people to the higher principles of education as these are tried and proved have an essential place in the program of the rural church.

(10) The rural church must direct its work to the winning of the marginal members of the community. This is essential to a social ministry. In order to reach the whole community those who are in jeopardy, or whose permanence in the community is in question, must be won. It is not so necessary for the church to seek the rich, or the devout, or the morally strong. Let them give of their gifts and contribute of their resources to the church. But the policies of the church in the country must be framed with the intention of reaching the

tenant farmer, the laborer, and the young people of the community; and with them any others who in a particular community are struggling, or discouraged, or likely to give up.

(11) Curiously, the most important thing of all is that the country church should take its own denomination seriously. There is a slovenly and indolent way of looking upon the rural congregation as if it did not matter whether it coöperated with the organized life of its denomination or not. But the country church is a part of a great religious society. If it is a Methodist church, it should be organized under the authority of the Bishop, the Superintendent, and the Boards of the church. Its policies should be obedient to the great purposes of the denomination. If it is Presbyterian, it can only be injured—it cannot at all be helped—by permitting it to be independent of Presbytery. If it

is Baptist, it ought to affiliate itself in hearty coöperation with the organized activities of the Baptist denomination. Each church must work in harmony with the methods of the organization on which it depends for its living. Mongrel churches which show a mixture of several denominations in their ways of work belong to no order of religion and are weaker than any. In a wide study of country churches it has been found that in the greatest number of instances the churches which are well organized, according to the manner and form of their denomination and according to the general plans and proposals of Christian men in our time, prove to be the best churches.

(12) For a particular population the church's program will be specially adapted. As an illustration we add a program of church work which is being used in a certain group of churches.

A PROGRAM FOR RURAL CHURCHES

LOOKING TOWARD A FORWARD MOVEMENT IN THESE CHURCHES DURING THE COMING YEAR ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

I. THE FEEDING OF THE FLOCK, or the building up of the members of the church in the knowledge of the Word of God and strengthening them in the Christian life.

The Means to be Employed

1. PREACHING

The preaching services in many rural churches are few and far between, once or twice a month. The most possible, therefore, should be made of these services by working out carefully, beforehand, each order of service, so that the congregation may proceed in a worshipful manner. The effectiveness of many a good sermon is spoiled by a bungling opening and closing exercise, beginning late and dragging through the service in a loose slipshod way.

Care should be used in selecting appropriate hymns, one of which at least should carry the theme of the sermon. Let the organist and choir have the hymns early in the week preceding the preaching services.

It is a decided advantage to have the congregation stand during the singing of the hymns. This

rests the people and helps to put them in better tune for listening to the sermon.

2. Pastoral Visitation

Let every home be visited at least twice a year, and oftener if possible, giving special attention to the sick.

No pastor should have favorite families to whose homes he runs often.

Let the pastor's calls be purposeful and not too long.

Aim to see and have a word with every member of the family before leaving the home even though it involves a trip to the field for a word of greeting with the boy behind the plow.

The pastor's visitation may be supplemented by the assistance of a well-selected visiting committee of men and women, including the officers.

3. The Sunday School

For greater efficiency and thoroughness the following things are recommended:

(1) Occasional teachers' meetings with the church officers for conference and prayer.

(2) The organization of a Cradle Roll and Home Department.

(3) The organization of the young people's classes for definite social service, one for the young men and one for the young women, where no other young people's organizations exist.

(4) The observance of at least the following

special days: Children's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Rally Day, taking the customary offerings on these occasions as recommended by the Church Boards.

(5) Have a series of ten-minute talks on the purpose of each of the several boards.

4. The Bible in the Home

Seek to install the practise of daily Bible reading by the family together in the homes, using the selections of Scripture given in the Sunday School Quarterlies for daily reading.

5. Prayer

Where a regular mid-week prayer-meeting at the church is not practicable, cottage prayer-meetings are recommended.

It is an excellent plan, occasionally, to precede the sermon with an informal prayer and praise service instead of using the regular formal opening service.

6. Woman's Missionary Society

A society should be organized in communities where none exists, for the study of missions, for fellowship, and for service. It may be combined with the Aid Society.

7. Religious Literature in the Home

(1) A religious weekly and missionary magazine. Earnest effort should be put forth to place a religious weekly and missionary magazine in every home.

(2) The leaflets from the various Boards.

8. A Christian Training Class

Pastors and officers are urged to begin Christian classes for the children between the ages of eight and fourteen years. Saturday afternoons through the summer season is a good time for the class to meet.

9. An Every Member Canvass

using the individual pledge; the double budget recommended. Annual church rally to follow this campaign.

II. EVANGELIZATION

The Means to be Employed

1. Preaching

(1) Part of the regular preaching services should be evangelistic in their nature and an invitation given. Have a special revival campaign for a number of weeks preceding Thanksgiving Day, or Easter, possibly from the first of January and culminating on Easter Sunday, in which all the regular preaching services are evangelistic. During this period encourage the members of the church to do personal work and to invite those not in the habit of church attendance to come to the meetings, and also to visit people in their homes.

(2) Occasional evangelistic meetings in the schoolhouses on Sunday afternoons in the winter

season or in a grove in the summer-time in which laymen and the young people participate largely.

(3) Special revival meetings by an evangelist if thought best.

2. Mission study in connection with the Sunday-school, the young people's organizations, and the woman's missionary society.

3. Offering for missionary work. (Not in addition to the regular offerings for benevolences and the special offerings taken in the Sunday-school on special days.)

4. Pastoral Visitation, and Personal Work by Church Officers and Teachers.

III. SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH CHURCH FORCES

See that at least one popular meeting is held in the community during the year in the interests of the five following causes, providing the initiative is not taken by any other agency than the church to do this work. In that case the church is to coöperate:

1. Education of the Young through the Public Schools.
2. Better Farming (Rural life institute).
3. Good Roads.

Have a good-roads day when everybody turns out to do some practical work on a given piece of road, the different crews meeting at a central place

at the noon hour for dinner with a good-roads speech by some competent person, if possible. Suitable literature in the shape of bulletins, tracts, and other literature should be distributed from time to time on these subjects.

4. Recreation. See that there is sufficient wholesome entertainment and recreation provided in the community for old and young.
5. Music. Do something special during the year toward developing the musical talent of the community.

It is urged that a record be kept of all efforts put forth, with the results obtained at certain dates.

IV

ILLUSTRATIONS OF SOCIALIZED RURAL CHURCH WORK

TO illustrate the principle of organized Christian work, examples of churches that have made good in the country are given here. No attempt is made to praise or promote these churches; they are named as sign-posts to guide the reader in the way of community service in the country.

A successful church in the country wears no label of being rural. It does not advertise farming. It is just a church in a high state of efficiency. For while every church, urban, rural, or foreign, reflects the social environment with the utmost precision, its own message is in all lands and places the

same. The greater its efficiency, the more perfectly does it exhibit the signs of a gospel institution, a religious association, a society of spiritual-minded people.

It should be borne in mind that no attempt is made here to enumerate the successful churches or to give any estimate of the proportion of country churches that illustrate the theme. None is mentioned, however, whose minister or people are not in a position to advise others as to the success and value of community service in their experience.

The extremes of community service are evangelism, on the one hand, and economic teaching, on the other. Very few country churches render community service by mere evangelism. Neither do many country ministers serve the community as teachers of agriculture, although it is perfectly obvious that the evangelistic spirit and the sympathetic relation of the minister to the

farmer in his economic struggle are essential to community service.

An example of evangelistic rural church work is the Methodist Episcopal Church at Alexandria, Licking County, Ohio, which has made it a business to "discover, win, and find a place for every natural leader." The work of this church is personal work. In one revival campaign 158 members were added to the church. The Brotherhood of the church has "the glad hand" as a motto. The Rev. Karl B. Alexander is the minister.

An instance of agricultural leadership, among the few in which ministers have taught their people how to farm, is that of a church in Saint Anthony, Du Bois County, Indiana. The rector undertook, with the advice of an agricultural professor in a state university, to transform the agricultural methods of his people. Six years of diligent study and constant experi-

mentation and discussion resulted in a revision of the methods of tilling the soil; a transformation of the farm economy from dependence upon grain to a dependence upon fruit culture.

Ministers generally agree with economists like Prof. Thomas Nixon Carver, in holding that the service of the church in the country should be social rather than economic. While the two cannot be kept strictly apart, the church is generally held to be a social, not an economic, institution. It has to do with the people, rather than the property, in the country. The Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Bellona, New York, have recognized this in their union to form a farmers' club. The original members of this club were the ministers and church officers of the two congregations named, which divide the field between them. Women as well as men have been admitted to the club, and from the first its

discussions have taken a high plane of interest. Cornell University professors have been among the most frequent speakers to address the club. Their topics have been as a rule economic and the studies made by the club have to do with the preservation of the soil, the marketing of farm products, as well as with the social problems of the family, the school, the church, and general questions of patriotism and mental culture. This club has been of great spiritual influence. By means of it the two churches have each had access to the central, social life of the community. All the people of the countryside have become through this club potentially members of each church and both pastors have had full access to the whole population. The Rev. T. Maxwell Morrison, Bellona, New York, is the pastor longest in service who knows about this work.

The Harmony Methodist Protestant

Church, in Ravenwood, Missouri, called as its pastor about five years ago a young minister, the Rev. C. R. Green. He undertook to live with his people in the country, eight miles and a half from town. They paid at that time an insufficient salary. One result of his ministry has been an ample and satisfactory support for the minister and a house for him to live in. The church recently had 207 members. The work has proceeded along lines of social development. Whatever the community needed as a relaxation from labor, as a diversion in the loneliness and isolation of farm work, as a means of emotional and esthetic culture to compensate for the tedium and commonplace in life, this church has seen fit to supply. The social life of the young people has been a large factor in Mr. Green's work. His own labor as a pastor and his residence among his people have been large contributions to the warmth and sym-

pathy and social growth of the countryside. Many organizations have been created to satisfy the needs of the people. Among other things a brass band of twenty-six pieces is maintained in this rural congregation. A crowning tribute to the social and intellectual capacity and to the fine culture of this congregation was given last summer, when the leading men who support the Chautauqua Assembly in Ravenwood asked the Harmony Church to take two days in the Chautauqua and to provide the program. The congregation accepted service for one whole day, came into town in a body and provided music, speakers, and other talent for the full day's program. On account of the long drive it was not thought best to take the second day, but the adventure gave heart and happiness to the rural church and taught them how far they had already gone in the development of community life.

Instances of the relation of the country church to the country school are many. Churches near Petersburg, Illinois, are mentioned, not because they alone illustrate this relation, but because they have done something distinctive. The Rev. H. O. Tribbe, pastor of the Free Baptist Church in the country near Petersburg, is teacher at the same time of the common schools. His work as minister does not interfere with his school-teaching, nor is his experience as a teacher ignored in his work as pastor. In the Sunday-school of his church graded lessons are used and children are graded according to their attainments in the common school grades, so that the children meet on the Sabbath day and study with their week-day companions.

The Presbyterian Church at Rock Creek, Illinois, occupies a peculiar relation to the public school. Formally it has no relation to it, for of course church and school are

separate in all American communities. But in the parish of this church there is no other congregation, so that the people in several school districts are Presbyterians. A definite influence, therefore, has been exerted upon the schools by the men of one congregation. Several years ago these leading men felt the force of the exodus from the country. They consulted as to methods for arresting this movement to the city and the town. The chief reason of their interest was the impoverishment of church and family life by the departure of prosperous and desirable neighbors. Attempts were made to select a desirable class of renters who should settle on the land. Ultimately this discussion narrowed down to the improvement of the public schools. Three districts were consolidated and the result has been most happy. The exodus from the countryside has been arrested, owners and tenants who come into the neighbor-

hood do so by preference and at some expense to themselves, because land is of higher value and rents for more money as a result of the improved schools. This experience of the Rock Creek church has been a typical illustration of the close relation between church and school, for these substantial farmers, descendants of the earliest settlers, realized keenly the necessity of good schools if their church was to be maintained in the countryside and if other churches were to be excluded from the parish bounds in which their church had been so long a community center. Now church and manse and consolidated school stand side by side in the open country.

Music is so religious a thing that it should have a place by itself. No other form of culture is absolutely necessary if the people be trained in church to sing. Gomer Congregational Church, in Allen County, Ohio, has for years, under the

leadership of Mr. George W. Williams, cultivated the best music. A choir of between fifty and a hundred voices can be assembled, and regularly throughout the year music is rendered of a quality rarely heard in the country. People travel in the summer months from near-by cities to hear and enjoy the singing at Gomer Church. This instance of esthetic culture as a form of social service illustrates what the church must do to make life worth while to people; to keep them from the discouragement and revulsion which come of commonplace experiences and material labor. Life must be given grace and the Sundays, as well as the evenings and mornings of the day, must be filled in some manner with beauty. Idealism must be had if men are to live and to live together. For this reason the churches which have cultivated music in an exceptional degree are illustrious under the head of community service.

A fine example of the centering of a spiritual life for a whole community in a church is seen in the Disciple Church at Hiram, Portage County, Ohio. So well-rounded is the work of this church that one cannot state its service in a single proposition. Hiram College and community pursue their labors together throughout the week and worship together in the Disciple Church on the Lord's day. Every interest of the community meets here. All the life-blood of the college and of the town flows in and out of the auricle and ventricle in this beating heart. An excellent building and a large membership, a minister, the Rev. John E. Pounds, awake to every intelligence of the learned and every need of the most humble, make eminent a church too well organized to be classified save that it is the center of the community.

The Sunday-school should by every line of probability be the working center of the

church, especially in the country. In the United Brethren Church of Old Fort, Seneca County, Ohio, this is true. The Sunday-school is large enough, with a membership of 231, to be a power, but its strength is not in mere numbers. It is excellently organized and its work centers in a course for teacher-training. Thirty-seven members of the school have graduated from the standard course. Last year there were eleven members in the third-year class of the advanced teachers' training course about to complete their studies. On the last Decision Day twenty-three members of the Sunday-school joined the church. The adult Bible class is a dynamic for evangelism. Mr. C. C. Drown, a business man of Old Fort, has charge of the teacher-training class and to him much credit is due for the organization of this efficient school at the heart of a serviceable church.

In selecting an illustrious instance of

financial ministry the place of the United Presbyterian Church is significant. In Cedarville, Green County, Ohio, is a church of this denomination which has an eminent financial system. The church publishes a directory and financial statement each year, in which are given the names of the members and the amount contributed toward salary and incidentals, with the amount also opposite each name contributed by that member toward missions and benevolences. Contributions no larger than five cents from children are fully itemized. The result is that of the total receipts in the last year reported of $6,500, only $2,050 went to the congregational expenses, and toward missionary interests $2,859 were contributed. The Mission Boards received from this church $10.25 per member. In the same year an amount equal to $1,400 was contributed for decoration and improvement of the church property, yet without special

subscription for these extra expenses. The pastor, the Rev. James S. M. McMichael, is sympathetic with the life of the young people and has served as coach on college and high-school teams. Cedarville is a village with three churches in a population of one thousand.

A brilliant example of the rounded success in a country church which comes to a minister and a people as a result of taking all phases of life into the circle of religion, is found in Buckhorn, Kentucky. In a little more than ten years the Rev. Harvey S. Murdock has built up a community church under conditions in which most men fail. His results in evangelism are in excess of those in any church of the same denomination in Kentucky. Indeed there are few in the country which have proportionately increased so much. But the "two arms of evangel in Buckhorn are baseball and the fight against illicit whisky." Buckhorn

is in the mountains of Kentucky, not far from the famous Breathitt County in which feuds and law-breaking seem perennial. But at Buckhorn the whole of life is brought under the influence of religion. People are taught to farm. The very corn and the hogs are taught to improve. The young people are encouraged to play. Public games entice the young men away from evil influences. A college with an enrolment in hundreds stands side by side with the church. All the needs of the countryside are met, and so far as possible satisfied, in a wholesome community life. Because the needs are acute and even tragic in Buckhorn the church has wrought a great success, which should be the greater, rather than the less, in communities where the same needs are in a commonplace, rather than in a tragic, form.

In the great Middle West, "the granary of the world," along with the improvement

of farming to meet the needs of a greater population, where scientific agriculture is getting its fullest use and coöperative action of farmers is becoming general, distinguished country churches are found in numbers. If the church may keep pace with the development of better farming her future is assured. Without the parallel development of the church the improved farming, because it is more profitable to a few, will result in a commercial spirit and a dispersed farm population.

In DeKalb County, Illinois, is the Suydam Methodist Episcopal Church, to which the Rev. Willis Ray Wilson came as pastor four years ago. This church is nearly six miles from the pastor's residence in Leland, and in it his rural congregation has a service of worship and preaching every Sunday, and, as it is the only church in Victor township, it has in its congregation the representatives of five denomina-

tions. The new minister began his work with a Sunday-school contest, the results of which amazed the countryside. At a final service the meeting-house was packed and there was a congregation of equal size out-of-doors, so that the pulpit was moved to the front porch for the occasion. An aggressive evangelistic campaign followed, and promptly, in the order which country ministers love, the church began to enlarge her interests. Corn contests, with prizes, were held and a baking contest for the ladies. A farmers' institute, with speakers seldom heard in such meetings, followed, and during the winter months entertainments, home talent plays, discussions of woman's suffrage, of consolidated schools and other humane problems, with lectures. Holiday entertainments filled the season of rural leisure. A country problem class studied during the winter the rural situation, both local and national. In the sum-

mer a great community picnic is held for all, with a "field day"; the men visiting in a body different fields for the comparative study of fertilizers in use. The women are organized as well as the men and the children. The pastor has a ready-made point of contact device by which he commends himself to the hired men, in the form of a husking-peg, which he carries in his pocket. Throughout the fall months he frequently uses it as a calling-card upon the tenant or hired man new to the community.

It is no wonder that the minister of this church declines to leave, for he realizes that the country church, when dignified with the whole-hearted service of a whole man and inspired with the spirit of the Master, is a great success and a more satisfying field of work than is the town or city. The secret of Mr. Wilson's success at Leland and at Suydam churches is systematic and sympathetic service among his people.

An equally interesting church in the country is at Osceola, in Stark County, Illinois. Here the pastor of the Baptist church has given six years to the service of a people of whom only eighty live in the village. His satisfaction has come in the reward of his belief that the "rural community must be the one big place in which he may serve Jesus Christ." He believes his people "worthy of his best effort, and the question is not 'Is this job big enough for me?' but 'Am I big enough for this job?'" The magnifying of the country church by the pastor at Osceola, whose name is Bartlett Eugene Allen, takes the form of developing not merely personal character, which indeed is the main business of the church, but also the social environment, and the centering of all social activity in the church. His ministry has been bold to appreciate, not merely the psychology, but the sociology, of the place. In other

words, the greatness of the country church in his eyes is the statesmanship growing out of personal service. Careful plans are made for social activities. The church enters heartily into every community gathering. There is a Fourth of July parade and plenty of fun, with a basket dinner, visiting, sports, and a baseball game. In an article on "Community Building" the minister says, "This one thing I would make plain, that I do not mean to say that the church must run everything in the social line, but it must so radiate the spirit of Christianity that all the social functions and the very life of the community will have a healthy moral tone." Mr. Allen believes in making the church big enough for the man. "The Illinois farmer does big things in a business way, and if the church is to reach him and to convert him to a better community life, it must be big enough to have a place in

his time and to appeal to his sense of strength." He believes in recognizing the rural intelligence and appealing to the brain and the energy of the Middle West farmer. Mr. Allen's views among those of ministers are the same as Prof. Carver's economic interpretation of the farmer. These men agree that the American farmer likes big machinery, large plans, adventurous purposes, and that to convert him to a community service he must be harnessed to great enterprises. Mr. Allen says, "I know of no place where the results of real active work for the Master are so sure and certain as out in the country ministering to those who live in the open, who toil and sow, breathing God's pure air and depending on nature to reward them with a bountiful harvest. They naturally live nearest to God, consequently respond most readily to his appeals."

At Fowler, Kansas, there is a Christian

church with a membership of one hundred and eighty in a population of less than seven hundred people, having three other Protestant churches. The development of this church has been due to the zeal and intelligent effort of Mrs. Mason and of the pastor, the Rev. John W. Jones. Its progress has resulted from plans they made in order to satisfy the obvious need of a religious and social center. Two lines of development are found in this church. The Sunday-school is well organized. Each class is an independent society, with officers and committees, and good-natured rivalry prevails throughout the Sunday-school. Prizes are offered and the sporting spirit is not despised, for the contests between classes sometimes are terminated in a banquet provided by the losers. The school does not despise genial methods which some think beneath the dignity of religious people.

The other characteristic of this church

is a cordial and sympathetic social spirit. The church offers opportunity for good times in music, entertainments, and social meetings, which have many occasions throughout the year. There is an organized choir meeting every Tuesday evening, on occasion furnishing special music. There is even a junior choir and of the little boys a quartet. Apparently this church believes in organization and an office for every one in which he may serve the community through some assigned part in the common purposes of the church.

Another church in the "corn belt" is the Presbyterian, at Edgington, Illinois. The minister, the Rev. A. G. Stewart, has been influential in forming the Edgington Rural Progressive Club, which held a two-days' farmers' institute during the worst blizzard of February, 1914, with an average attendance of forty-five persons. Every speaker was a specialist. Such problems were dis-

cussed as consolidated schools, community social life, newspaper publicity, and the opportunities for girls at the state university. Good roads were so thoroughly discussed that a resolution was passed for bonding the country to secure funds for good country roads. The relation of these economic and social improvements to religion is more evident in the country than elsewhere. Farmers do not need to have explained to them why the evangelist who preaches about heaven on Sunday shall preside at a meeting for good roads on Monday. "The kingdom of God has come near unto you" in the country, more near than in the cities where life is divided and religion is alien to many material interests. Generally throughout the United States the churches which are succeeding in the country and holding their own are marked by broad sympathies, humane leadership, full possession of the gospel message as it

is taught in the Old and New Testaments, and all these are assured by the residence of a pastor in the country among his people —a man whose heart is open and sympathetic to every need of the countryside.

V

SUGGESTIONS FOR RURAL CHURCH BUILDINGS

IN the day of extension, which in most of the states is at an end so far as the open country is concerned, church buildings were erected having only one room. The present needs require in the country a church building of a composite and elaborate form. It should fit the community, as the community grows, just as a garment fits the growing form of a child. Radical changes in clothing come in the life of a child, and a radical change has come to the country church, requiring a structure for worship suited to the composite and elaborate needs of the community.

These needs are many in the service of

the most conservative type of religion. Their number is increased when one regards the church as a community force. In the country there are so few social forces at work in an organized form that the church is charged with more numerous responsibilities even than in the city. It is the only free institution universal among country people. In every region where farmers have settled they have erected churches without the help of government, by their own choice, so that the church is an exponent of the feeling and of the will of country people as no other institution is. It has the most valuable tradition and it inherits the most inspiring conceptions of community life. Lodges do not feel responsible for the whole community. Schools are charged with a service to the children alone. But the church recognizes, toward the whole population, a duty to render the most public and open service.

In all building or erecting of churches it is important that the advice be asked of those who know how to design and to build. Ministers and church officers are seldom trained as architects or as builders, and the church should be a thing of beauty as well as of use. For the sake of both use and beauty the advice of an architect should be secured.

The rebuilding of the rural house of worship is upon the mind of many congregations and their ministers. We present in this chapter the plan of one such church, which combines the elements entering into a great number of reconstructed country churches. It is the Du Page Presbyterian Church at Du Page, Illinois, of which the Rev. Matthew Brown McNutt was pastor. The story of its reconstruction has been told in his pamphlet "Modern Methods in the Country Church." It is published here because the plans could easily be secured.

Other country churches contain the same elements. This one has a sufficient appeal to the community to illustrate the whole of the problems arising out of country life.

The Du Page Church is a rebuilt country church. The former building, having but one room, was used in the new structure, its walls being utilized in the construction of the Sunday-school portion of the new building. This building furnishes means of ministry to the whole community in educational, social, musical, and athletic directions, and all these kinds of ministry are coördinated with the central fact of worship, to the uses of which the main part of the new structure is devoted.

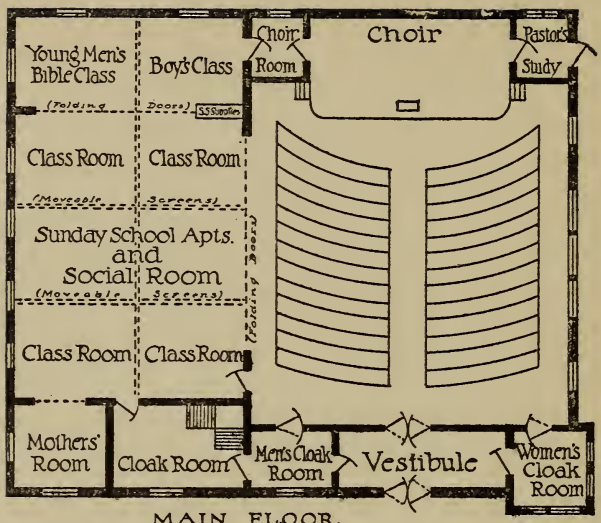
The Du Page Church is best understood by one who comes to it on a wintry day from a long drive in the country. Comfortable sheds are provided for the farmers' horse or horses; and when he enters the church the farmer himself finds a warm

THE DU PAGE CHURCH

cloak-room beside the doorway, in which he may leave his heavy outdoor garments. At the end of the service or entertainment he will find them dry and comfortable. During his time in the church building they do not encumber the seat he occupies. A similar cloak-room is furnished for his wife.

If small children come to the church a room is provided in the farthest corner from the auditorium, in which are rocking-chairs and a comfortable bed always made up for the little children. Here a mother may rock her baby to sleep, and leave the child during the entertainment or the service of worship. Sometimes six little children have occupied this room at one time. The walls of this room are tastefully decorated with attractive pictures of mothers and children.

The chief feature of the Du Page Church is the plain and simple auditorium for



MAIN FLOOR

BASEMENT

FLOOR PLANS OF THE DU PAGE CHURCH

worship. While not reserved exclusively for public worship, this meeting-place makes a peculiar appeal to the devotional spirit. People who come in even on a week-day are accustomed to sit down quietly as in a cathedral. The wonted use of this room has made its impression upon the whole countryside. In all the experience of the Du Page Church, with entertainments, musical events, Sunday-school, and church services, there has been singularly little cause for complaint. A peculiarly high sense of reverence is associated with the place of worship.

Opening on the side of the auditorium by sliding doors is a Sunday-school room, which may be made an extension of the church auditorium. At one end of this structure are large classrooms. At the other end, nearest to the road, are the mothers' room and a cloak room.

On either side of the pulpit recess is a

small room; one for the choir and one for the minister. Du Page Church has made a great deal of musical culture. Partly because of the gifts and training of the former minister and his wife and partly because of the capacities of their people, a large place has been occupied in the development of this church by music. Singing classes and public entertainments with music as a central source of pleasure and education have been many. The history of the church shows how great a place in the social development of the community may be occupied by music. One is reminded of the use of music in the ancient development of the church, both in medieval times and in the inspired history of the Hebrews.

In the basement, under the old structure, there is, in addition to an adequate heating plant, a dining-room with kitchen at hand for the use of the ladies. This room is simple and strongly made, with cement

floor, so that while it is used on occasion for a church dinner without disturbance of the main parts of the building, it may be used as well for an evening game by the young people, or a place of winter indoor sports by the boys of the community. Without the building are adequate grounds on which the young people of the community have had much pleasure. The residence of the minister is near by in a manse owned by the church, so that Du Page Church has a suitable plant capable of ministering in any way to the needs of the whole community. At times the congregation has appropriated for evangelistic meetings and for public religious services in which the young people and men of the community have taken part a grove not far from the church. Indeed the whole countryside has been made tributary to this church because of its force and its appeal to the whole community.

Du Page Church contains in its building

every feature most essential to the development of community life. The building is not thought perfect and in other communities a different adaptation might need to be made, but for an open country church it has in a large measure the facilities and the means necessary for community service. The reconstruction of the old building was accomplished at a cash expenditure of ten thousand dollars, the whole of which was contributed within the community. The building was dedicated without debt. Of this church the Rev. Arthur Amy is pastor.

VI

THE TOWN OR VILLAGE CHURCH IN LEADERSHIP OF COUNTRY LIFE

THE village is not an alien in the country, but it is the rural capital. Cities are of a different order of life, but villages are of the rural order. The business of the village is to buy and sell with country people. The residents of the village are of the same stock as those who till the farm. The increase or the decrease of village population is identical with that of the open country. The concerns—social, economic and religious—of the village are the concerns of the open country. Therefore the village church should have a great place in the leadership of country life.

By the village in this connection we mean a center of population not greater than twenty-five hundred in number. There are some places that come within the meaning of this chapter where even more people dwell, and some population centers of less than twenty-five hundred have no real connection with the country, because they have to do with mining or manufacture. Bearing these exceptions in mind, the rule described is helpful in understanding the relation of the village to the open country.

Unfortunately village churches have become alienated from the country. The relation of the city church to the open country has been thought of and the fact that the village is the capital of country life has been forgotten. But the city church has troubles enough of its own. It has the infinitely difficult problem of immigration. It has the down-town and the workingman's problem. Questions of moral weight

which do not trouble the open country, except indirectly, have made impact upon the city church. The village church should concern itself with the country, as it seldom does. As a rule, around the villages and towns, which are centers of the economic life of the farmer, there is a zone usually two to four miles in width in which people generally do not go to church. They have no relation to the village churches which stand beside the stores where they trade. The churchgoer turns away from the village or town to worship in some obscure rural meeting-house or more often to worship not at all. The village too often repels the farmer.

The sources of this alienation are not wholly religious. Around village and town and small city has been built an economic wall, which must be broken down, if the farmers are to feel at home in the village and town. There must be many lines of

connection and intercourse before worship can become the crowning expression of unity among those whose life centers in the village.

Brilliant examples of the ministry of the church in the village or the open country are found in all sections of the country, though their total number is small. Dr. Silas E. Persons, Presbyterian minister for twenty years in Cazenovia, New York, was one of the first to see that his church had lost its rural attendance. The road to the church from a neighboring section of farms, which used to bring twenty families on Sunday morning, in recent years was found to bring only three to church. Dr. Persons began his ministry to the country by holding meetings in schoolhouses. He found an amazing response to the simple preaching of the gospel among a people who for some strange reasons had been denied its privileges for a generation.

So large and so promising were the results that the policy of his church had to be revised to fit the new tasks and responsibilities.

Dr. Persons and his people went about the task with characteristic thoroughness. Social meetings were devised, dinners of welcome and other social occasions, for the particular purpose of welcoming the new converts to the village church. They were made to feel at home. They were received not into formal membership alone, but into the heartiest share in the church so near the center of their social and economic life. These measures went forward throughout a whole year, while new districts in the country were invaded by the preacher, seeking to give the gospel to those who attended no church. The crowning act of unifying the community in Cazenovia was the annual fair established in September as a meeting-place of all interested in the

community. An exhibit of everything done and made in the community, plowing contests, quilting competitions, sports on land and water, engaged the attention of all the people of the community. Nothing has been for sale. The event has become a great gathering of the people of Cazenovia and vicinity. The first year the attendance was to be counted in hundreds, but after that in thousands.

The Rev. H. S. Mills, of Benzonia, Michigan, is a Congregational minister to whom the enlargement of his parish came almost as a vision, after years of service in a village where cultured and privileged people of the countryside live. His experience is related in the book, *The Making of a Country Parish: A Story*. Going out first among the rural dwellers beyond the normal bounds of his congregation, he spent days and weeks in exploration of the religious needs of people outside the zone of

the village. He came back deeply impressed with the need of a larger unit of life and worship in his church. His people engaged with him in a consecrated effort to extend the parish bounds beyond their traditional radius. They undertook with him increasing burdens. They released him from local service for the larger adventure. Persistent effort to evangelize the countryside, from which men had not been accustomed to go to church, brought such real results that the whole life and program of the Benzonia church was changed.

Allies came to the church and its minister from two quarters. The missionary superintendent of his own denomination offered him, after considering the matter, an assistant. Later another assistant was added, with the growth of the work. This gave an adequate parish force. With fine organizing ability the minister of the Benzonia church has been able to accomplish

five times as much with three pairs of hands as he was able to do with one. A second alliance of the parish came in the form of coöperation with a neighboring denomination, which gave up to the Benzonia church certain preaching points within its larger parish, receiving in return a corresponding surrender in another field at a distance. This left to the church with enlarged vision a great open territory in which it could render cathedral service.

The results have been very great both in the way of unifying the countryside under a common religious leadership and in the way also of increase in attendance and in contributions in the Benzonia church itself.

In a village in the East where there are three churches the problem of degeneracy in the outlying locality became very acute; so much so that the moral tone of the village was impregnated to an alarming degree. To meet this situation

the churches of the village came together in a Social Service League, recognizing their common problem. Two near-by villages in the same township joined with them. A social worker was engaged. Through this medium an excellent work was done. While not under the direction of the churches exclusively, the work was promoted by them, and thus they were brought together in a form of federation that made a unity of spirit in bettering the village conditions that was invaluable.

Every village church should have a program of service to the people of the open country. Many churches in the village will find that if they minister with acceptance to the farmers dwelling along the country roads, they will thereby win the villagers dwelling along the village streets. We suggest the following brief program for the village church.

(1) Persistent annual evangelization of

the open country at meetings in schoolhouses, in which the pastor shall have the assistance of teams of laymen who shall go out with him or by themselves to speak, to testify, and to teach, in Sunday-schools and religious meetings in the open country. Unused church buildings, schoolhouses or farmhouses, or in the summer open-air places, may be used for these meetings. The purpose in them all is to build up, not primarily local congregations, though these in some places may follow, but to build up the village church by gathering into its membership the people of the open country.

(2) In order to bridge the chasm between the village and the country deliberate methods of socialization are necessary. The people of the country will not feel at home in the village church, if they have been alienated from it, without special modes of welcoming them. It is not enough to assemble groups of converted people in the

country, and to receive them into membership. It is profoundly important that they be made members of the local church and brought into working and vital union on Sunday with those with whom they trade throughout the week.

For this purpose a series of celebrations of the holidays of the year is commended. The village should be the center of commemorating the great days of the church and the secular year. Days that are set apart by the state and by the Church may well be made the occasion of the gathering of all the people from the countryside. If they are foreigners this is a good method of Americanization. If they are hard-worked, these holidays will bring them together for rest and recreation. If tenants are many, these celebrations will enable them to meet with the landlord in a democratic and helpful manner.

(3) The village church should see that

means are provided for the comfort of country people at a central point in the village. Horse-sheds are sometimes lacking in the village, and as a form of social service the opening of horse-sheds on the church property for the free use of the public is sometimes of sensational value. But if the church should care for the horse, it should care far more for the women and children, who come with their men from the country for business and practical purposes. While the men are trading, the women should have a comfortable place to wait. It may well be in the church or other public building. It should be near to the stores, conveniently furnished to meet the needs and to provide comfort for those who have to wait. Such an enterprise may be greatly enlarged to form a kind of forum or meeting-hall where men and women may have many services rendered such as are needed in a busy farming community.

(4) The church should bear in mind that her place is to bring comfort and peace and spiritual unity to the people. The village church should be watchful of all the needs of the countryside. It should provide means for the discussion of general interests. It should bear in mind that these general interests are almost surely agricultural interests, for these are bonds the most profound and the most pervasive in country life. Churches should not scorn to be the nursing mothers of enterprises which will pass beyond their control. There are two churches in New York state located in villages, whose members in their rural meetings have conceived and planned the lighting of the village streets. This is a good illustration of the form of social service of value to the farmer as much as to the village dweller. One village church in a neighborhood made up of Protestant and Roman Catholic people has planned and launched

an enterprise which took form in a village bank much needed by an honest, hard-working population. These illustrations are given, not as the highest or the noblest thing a church can do, but as examples of service to be rendered by a village church attentive to any and all the needs of the flock for which it stands. The parish of the village church lies far out of the village streets. Minister and people must conceive their work in all the village in the largest way and bring into the fold of God all those whose faces are turned at any time of the week toward the streets of the village.

VII

THE COMMUNITY CENTER CHURCH AS THE EMBODIMENT OF FEDERATION AND RELIGIOUS UNION

THE doctrine of religious unity is dear to the heart of all Christian people. As much as any doctrine of the fathers this ideal of their sons is powerful in the modern heart, especially of business men and farmers. One meets it in all parts of the country. In every public gathering the expression of the longing for religious unity calls forth a tumultuous response. Books without number have been written upon it. Creeds and programs have been conceived and produced in every part of the country. Federations have been organ-

ized in greater numbers than the denominations which they would unite. Indeed there is more than one denomination in the country which was conceived and born with the purpose of being a union of divided Christian people.

There is a service rendered, though it be temporary, by union churches and creeds and programs and federations. This service is partly negative. It appears to be clearing the way for greater Christian union. These measures put an end to the old recriminations and condemn the former custom of mutual criticism between denominations. Yet union churches seldom live long and the programs or creeds of church federations do not get themselves organized. The union of divided Christian people is slow in coming. In the United States the marriage even of communions bearing the same name is retarded and delayed by difficulties.

The churches of the North American Continent are looking to Canada, where positive union seems to be near at hand. The close sympathy of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches and the working union of which they have already more than a promise throws a light of hope upon the divided state of American Christianity. Many devout people hope and pray that the imminent union may be perfected, but in no other religious experience are we brought so plainly face to face with the working of God's hand alone, as in the profoundly difficult and delicate enterprise of uniting the Christian churches.

Meantime the church which serves the community is an embodiment of the union of Christian people. While men have been dreaming ineffective dreams of legislative union between denominations, the Holy Spirit has been teaching us to socialize the

work of the churches. Ministers and people have longed for a useful church. Their hearts have expanded with interest in social service. They have worked together in making the church a ministering agency to the whole community. Wherever this has been done, there has been found the union and coöperation of Christian folk about which federations and fusions have talked and dreamed.

These community churches are found in all denominations. They are stronger if they have a denominational name and the momentum of one of the great churches, than if they be independent or union efforts. They have come into existence through the leadership of men whose heart God has touched and whose eyes have been anointed with the ability to see the new day. Service of the whole community is a new development of the spirit of man under the teaching of the Spirit of God.

A COMMUNITY CENTER

In the cities this relation between comity or federation of churches and community service is not so apparent as in the open country, for in the country the population is sparse and generally is diminishing. There is no room for a church to serve the people except in a coöperation of all the Christian people in the community, and in the country it has become apparent that everywhere such community service, urban or rural, is coöperative. Wherever it is rendered it expresses the unity of Christian folk, for service is the work of the Master. About his work Christian people are not in disagreement. In doing his work the followers of the Master are brought together. To do the service which men need to-day in the community is to express his mind and will. The challenge to community service is the true test of the Christian in all denominations. It calls men of devout mind together. It disregards the divi-

sions between conservative and liberal. It unites the devout and the humble of every sort and name. It satisfies the longing of humble folk, who find in service the very thing for which they became Christians. It is the rallying center around which all men may be gathered, and in this center under the flag of the Master his fellow servants find the comfort and the faith which has been in all times the motive and the reward of the children of God.

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